

# Environmental Planning and Territorial Approach in Nicaragua

From Policy Framework to Local Realities

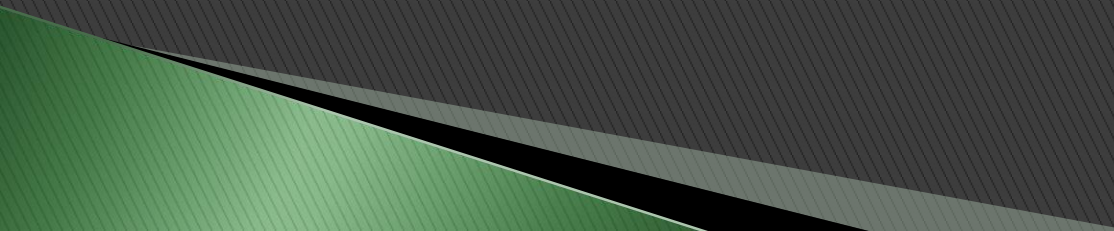
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# Outline of the presentation

1. Context and problematic
  2. The case study
  3. Results
  4. Discussion
  5. Conclusion
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# Context and problematic

- ▶ In 2007, the Nicaraguan Government launched its economic growth and poverty reduction strategy with the *National Human Development Plan*
  - New strategies and a different way of dealing with poverty are accompanied by a more decisive role to be played by the state, citizens, and the international community
  - Beyond economic priorities, the Plan is based on a combination of human and environmental dimensions, as well as a territorial governance approach to development
    - => In a context of decentralization and democratization of policy processes

# Context and problematic

## ► *Territorialization*

- *Territorialization* is a public policy approach that focuses on the specificities of each territory, as opposed to a vertical dividing public action in partitioned sectors
- *Territorialization* involves the elaboration and implementation of a development strategy that can adapt sectoral policies to local constraints
- More generally, *territorialization* refers to a process aimed at building the territory

# Context and problematic

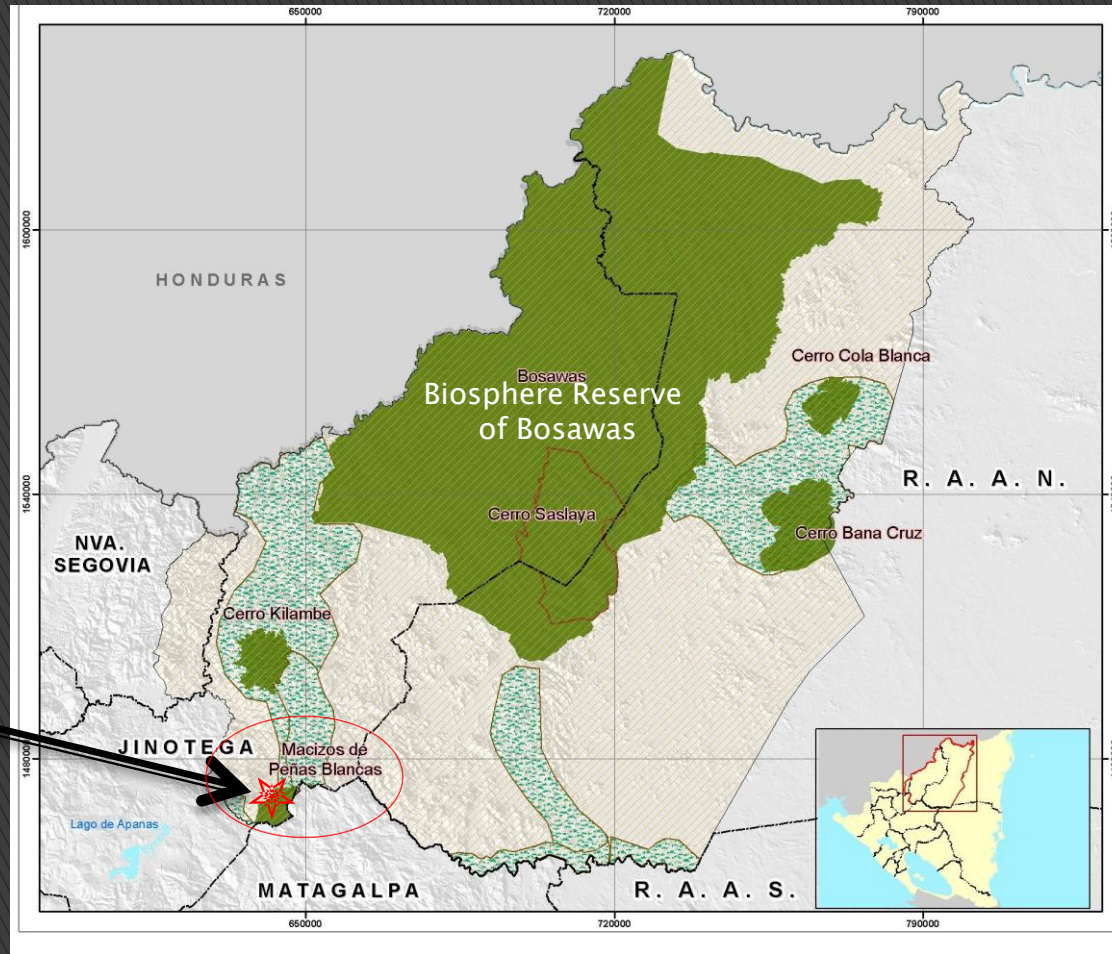
- ▶ Despite various propositions of *territorial development* frameworks, only the environmental policy adopts a territorial approach
  - It provides definitions of territories
    - Protected areas, watersheds, or geographical units with a common localized production system
  - The territorial approach is one of the central instruments for environmental planning in order to achieve maximum possible harmony between society and environment
  - It defines an "*environmental territorial development*" strategy, and frames it within a policy of "*conservation and sustainable use of ecological systems*"
    - It refers not only to natural resources but also to productive activities such as agriculture in rural areas

# Research questions and framework

- ▶ Can we talk about *territorialization* of environmental planning in Nicaragua? How does it work? What are the constraints and perspectives?
- ▶ Pilot research initiative to better understand the territorial approach of rural development in Nicaragua
- ▶ Combination of geographic and sociological methods
  - Qualitative research based on original data analysis
    - Direct observations and in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders
- ▶ Funded by the Network for Public Policy and Inequality in Latin America and implemented by CIRAD and UCA/Nitlapán



# The municipality of El Cuá, Nicaragua



Municipality  
of El Cuá

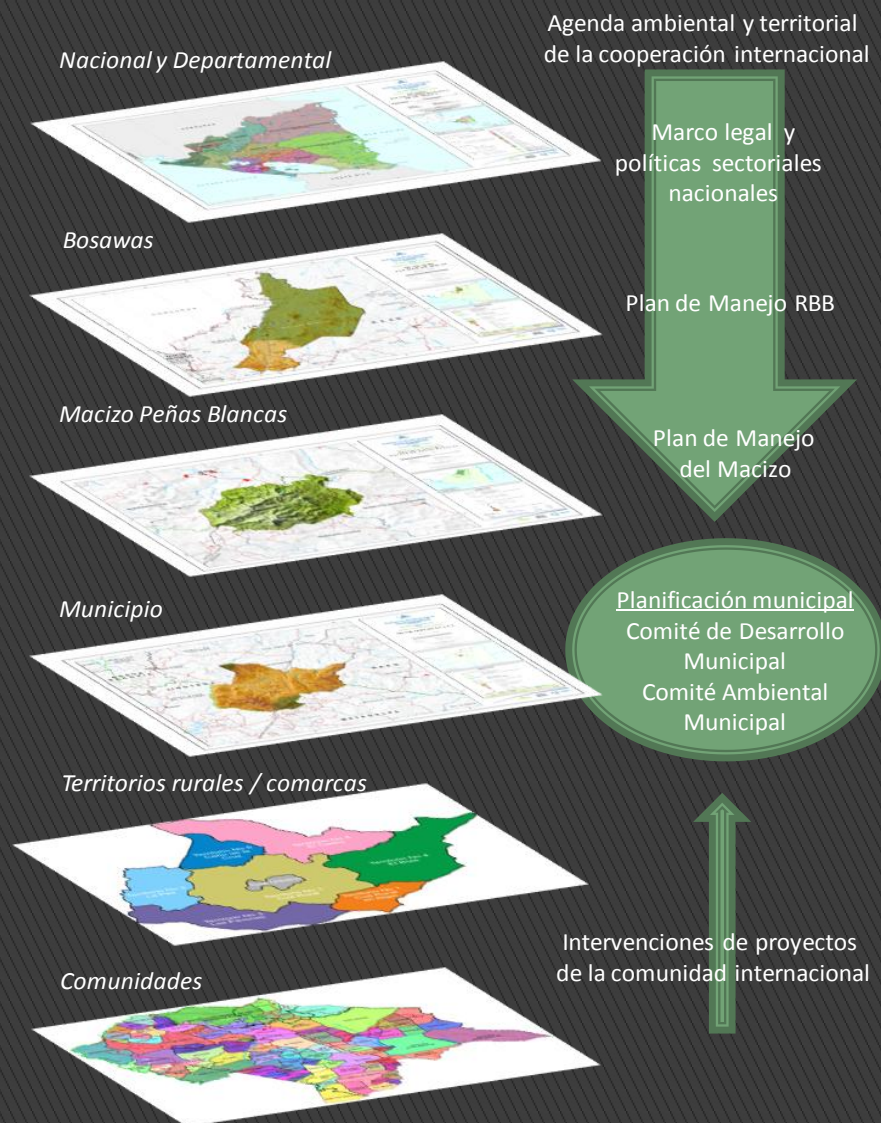
# The municipality of El Cuá, Nicaragua

- ▶ El Cuá is located is part of the 6 nucleus zones of the Biosphere Reserve of Bosawas (RBB) in the Macizo de Peñas Blancas (MPB)
  - RBB is the most important reserve in Central America for its area (14% of Nicaragua territory), localization and biodiversity (the 3rd in the world)
  - Evidences of deforestation and water pollution have been pointed out
- ▶ El Cuá is located in an agricultural region oriented toward coffee, cattle and grain production
  - The rationality is that environmental planning goes against economic objectives of production
    - However, there are some emerging economic interests for producers to comply with social and environmental norms and standards
    - Some stakeholders in the territory found in the environmentalist discourse a way for better capturing resources
  - Many public and private interventions in the territory have been implemented over the last two decades (Bosawas, 1991)
    - Technical assistance to preserve soils and water
    - Direct funding to promote environment conservation



# Environment planning and territorial dialogue

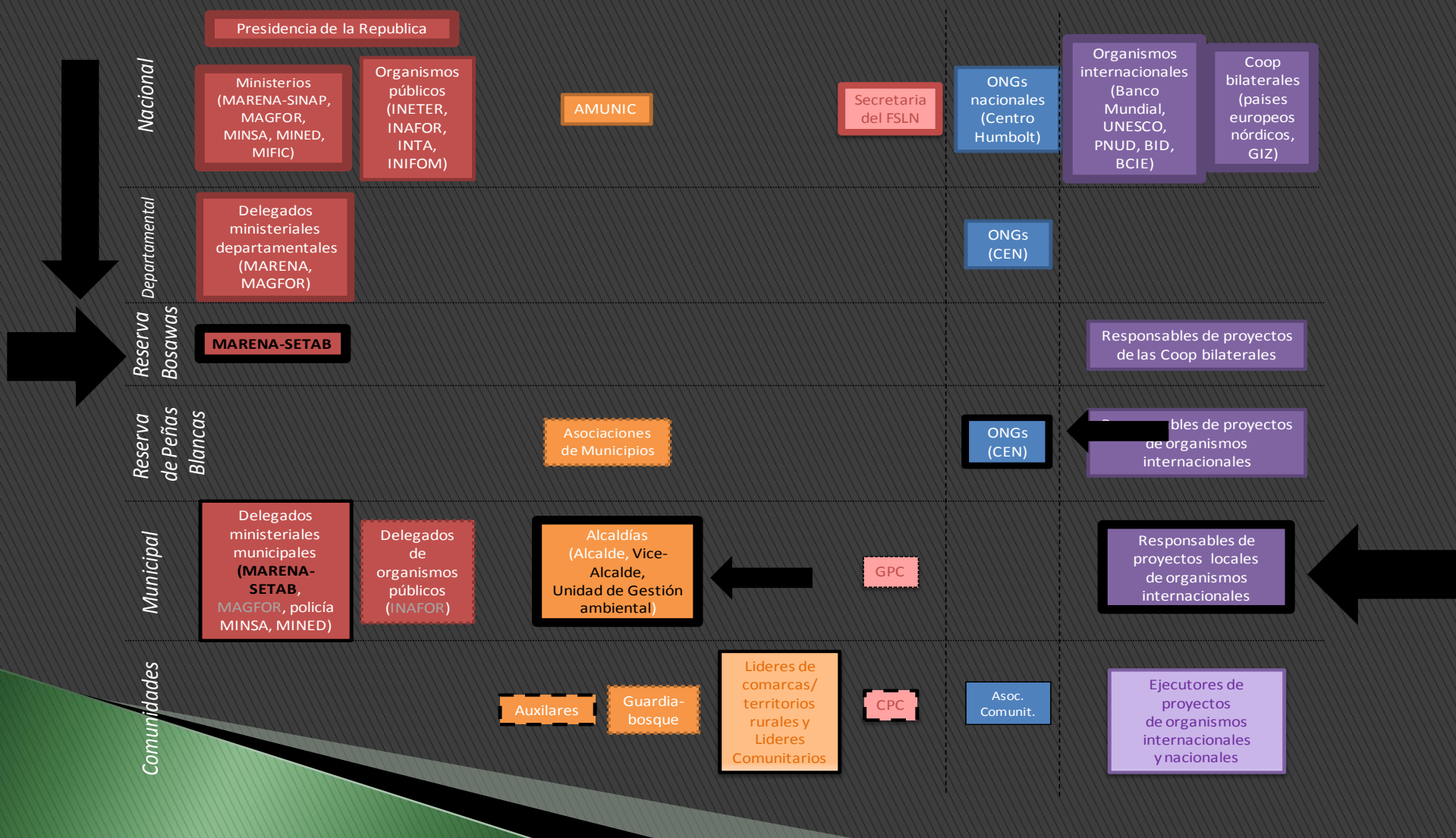
- ▶ Nicaragua has not yet decentralized decision-making powers on environment-related policy to municipal governments
  - MARENA still control policy making
  - There is only a local translation of national policy, with some degree of de-concentration
- ▶ The existence of Municipal Environment Commissions (CAM) at territory level is illustrative of a trend toward *territorialization*
  - A CAM is a forum of government, citizen and NGOs' representatives to address environmental issues
  - It is considered as a major level of consultation



# Environment planning and territorial dialogue

- ▶ The CAM was conceived by the Ministry of Environment (MARENA)
  - It makes it possible for the government to undertake a number of activities affecting environment, and often more broadly, territorial development
  - It aims at promoting multi-level and inter-institutional coordination within the municipality
- ▶ The municipal government's capacity to incorporate a CAM is directly related to its substantial budget
  - Municipal governments are frustrated by the quantity of responsibilities conferred to them without any comparable fiscal transfers that would improve their capacity to meet these new obligations

# The stakeholders of the CAM



# A try of *territorialization* of policy?

- ▶ In El Cuá, there is a combination of conditions for an effective *territorialization* of environment planning
  - Capacity
    - => As part of a Biosphere and a Natural Reserves, El Cuá receive the support of several important international and local organizations
  - Incentives
    - => There is an interplay of economic motives and civil society pressure
      - To capture available funding both from important funders or NGOs
      - To integrate environment dimension in production
      - To solve the existing conflicts around natural resources use
  - Interest
    - => there are local trends for a better understanding of environment-related problems in the municipality

# A try of territorialization of policy?

- ▶ But, there are still major obstacles
  - Coordination of actions
    - Organizations involved in the CAM still mostly focus on their area of interest (sectoral) and often don't talk to each other
    - Within these organization, there are coordination problems between delegations, in particular MARENA
  - Consultation and participation
    - The CAM is only consultative and has not decision-making powers
    - Major stakeholders do not participate in the CAM (farmers, private sector)
    - Population is poorly aware of what is going on (even elected local leaders)
    - Projects (from external cooperation) lead the mediation within, and the functioning of the CAM => what legitimacy?



# A try of territorialization of policy?

- ▶ That question *territorialization* process and its sustainability...
  - Neither the central state, nor the municipal government have the financial, technical, and human resources to make it work
  - At the national level, decision-making power is mostly based on external imported models
  - NGOs or projects (cooperation) provide funds and definitely orient environmental planning
  - And as most of planning models are imported from external stakeholders, little is effectively adapted to local reality, taking into account population priorities

# Conclusion

- ▶ The study provides an overview of an experiment or *territorialization* of public policies in Nicaragua, through the example of environmental planning
- ▶ The result show that there is still important obstacles to overcome
  - Lack of capacity, including an appropriate legal framework
    - A legal framework for territorial development would clarify responsibility and would clearly establish a local decision-making authority
  - Lack of local incentives specifically dedicated to territorial development
    - Incentives may include the possibility of increasing municipal income from various sources (NGOs, projects or other civil society actors) and/or the need to solve some local conflicts
  - The missing element is also a real local interest, and the consequent participation of all local stakeholders
    - Long-term interest = environmental planning, but including economic and human dimensions

# Conclusion

- ▶ With an appropriate territorial development framework, NGOs and projects can play a key role in *territorialization*
  - To increase local capacity or to provide incentives for immediate action without promoting the process itself
  - To examine the way in which these actions are being incorporated into the local knowledge base and promoting local appropriation of the issues
- ▶ This requires a new vision of municipal government for both political leaders and their constituents
- ▶ This process should survive changes of administration, which could otherwise reverse the advances made, only through the integral and institutionalized participation of civil society

Thank you  
for your attention